A PLAN FOR THE DEFINITE RATING OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS[1]

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The individual colleges and the various accrediting associations, like the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Middle Atlantic states and Maryland, and our own Commission on Accredited Schools of the Southern States, have, after a rather long period of trial and experimentation which I hope has only well begun, worked out rather definite standards of accrediting second-ary schools. But after these standards are applied, and the score cards evaluated, the result is that all schools are divided into two classes, one of which the colleges accept and the other of which they reject. When the lists are published the only difference between a school on the accredited list and one not on it, so far as can be judged from the list itself, is that one has met the minimum require-ments, and may have scarcely done so, while the other may have just barely missed crossing the line of demarcation.

In other words, there is no relative rating of the schools—a school scoring 51 points out of a hundred being placed in the same class as a school scoring 95 points out of a hundred. For the pur-poses of the colleges this may suffice, because if the minimum standards accepted by them qualify for college entrance and college work, surely those schools whose standards are beyond the minimum are all the more acceptable.

The standards of accrediting, therefore, do not in themselves, as at present administered, afford an adequate method of rating schools, in that their relative standing is not determined. For example, there were 278 schools accepted by our commission for

the year 1914–15. So far as can be judged from the report itself one school on the list is just as good and no better than any and every other school on the list.

In justice to the schools themselves it is asserted, with reason, that some method should be devised and adopted of rating the schools according to their relative merits and efficiency. Can such a plan be wrought out and put into practical operation? If so, who should take the initiative in the matter, the schools themselves or the colleges?

It is manifest that a school which barely meets the minimum ten standards of accrediting from *a* to *j*, inclusive, laid down by our commission is not in justice entitled to have its name inscribed as high up on the honor roll as one which meets each requirement in fullest measure.

It is not my intention to offer a complete workable plan or to propose a substitute for the present method of accrediting by our commission, but only to give the results of an attempt I made on my own account and for my own information to rate, or rather to check up, the schools from which students were received in the college department of the University of Virginia on the basis of the success of their students in college.

I believe it impossible to ascertain exactly the relative standing of schools by the application of any one single test, but if any one standard may be used as a reliable yard-stick it is the biblical standard, "by their fruits ye shall know them." Accordingly I set about to find a method of judging the efficiency of the schools by the products sent to us, in the following manner: I ascertained from the college records the names of all the students entering the college (the professional schools, law, medicine, and engineering were not included) for the three sessions of 1911–12, 1912–13, 1913–14. I then ascertained the total number of courses taken by all the students from each school during their first term in college, and also the total number of courses passed. Dividing the number of courses by the number taken gave me the percentage of success of that school. For example, School A had three students registered who took altogether ten courses and passed upon nine, making 90 per cent success. Another school had six students registered

who took 22 courses, passing upon three, making 14 per cent success.

If the students from each of these schools were average students and fairly represented the product of each school, it is clear that the former should be ranked much higher than the latter. The other facts about the schools seemed upon investigation to justify the conclusion indicated by the percentages of success and I felt warranted in temporarily withdrawing the latter school from our list, after reporting the facts, with the result that immediate steps were taken by the owners to strengthen the teaching force and raise the standards generally in that school.

It would hardly be fair to rate a school solely on the records made by its students in one college, but if the records of all of the students who entered college from that school in any given year or term of years were collected and treated as I have indicated a very fair and reasonably accurate rating, I am convinced, would result. There may be and doubtless are some schools which would not desire such a rating by such a test, but the best should have no fear of this method.

This raises the question suggested earlier in this paper: Who should take the initiative in this matter, the schools or the colleges? I am convinced that the schools themselves should do so, and should seek the co-operation of the colleges. If the schools on our accredited list, or any number of them, would get the records of all their pupils who enter the colleges and rate themselves as indicated, they would soon establish a standard of relative rating which would become as universal as the present standards of accrediting.

Table I gives some of the results of my investigation. I have omitted names for obvious reasons and have included no school sending fewer than three students, because it would not be accurate and fair to conclude that, because one or two pupils gave a school a rating of 100 per cent success the school was superior to one from which twenty-two enrolled and made only 69½ per cent success. From this record one would, I think, be justified in concluding that school No. 42 is a better college-preparatory school than school No. 4 or No. 12, and that school No. 14 is not in the same class

with most of the others on the list.   The general reputation of
these schools agrees with this conclusion.

TABLE I

School No.	No. Registered	No. Courses Taken First Term	No. Courses Passed First Term	Percentage of Success	School No.	No. Registered	No. Courses Taken First Term	No. Courses Passed First Term	Percentage of Success
1.....	4	15	14	$93\frac{1}{3}$	22....	3	12	7	$58\frac{1}{3}$
2.....	3	16	12	75	23....	18	72	66	91
3.....	9	34	12	35+	24....	3	12	9	75
4.....	11	40	26	65	25....	12	56	46	82
5.....	3	14	9	64+	26....	5	22	18	81
6.....	4	15	3	20	27....	4	13	8	61
7.....	3	9	9	100	28....	22	92	76	82
8.....	18	69	54	78+	29....	7	23	19	82
9.....	6	26	14	53+	30....	12	73	38	41
10.....	4	10	8	80	31....	3	11	8	72
11.....	7	30	14	$46\frac{2}{3}$	32....	8	31	12	31
12.....	37	143	97	67	33....	3	9	3	$33\frac{1}{3}$
13.....	3	11	7	63	34....	3	13	7	53
14.....	7	28	11	39+	35....	3	14	14	100
15.....	3	12	9	75	36....	4	19	17	89
16.....	4	13	8	61+	37....	8	32	20	60
17.....	4	15	13	$86\frac{2}{3}$	38....	6	25	20	80
18.....	42	148	95	64	39....	11	45	33	$73\frac{1}{3}$
19.....	6	27	24	$88\frac{2}{3}$	40....	5	21	15	71
20.....	7	21	11	52+	41....	4	16	11	$68\frac{3}{4}$
21.....	3	14	13	92	42....	33	128	106	83−